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This issue includes eight pages of questions and answers on food stamps. You'll find information on: who is eligible; how people apply for, get, and use stamps; work registration; and participants' rights and responsibilities.

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NUTRITION

Nutrition Education and Training

A several-part feature takes a look at the Nutrition Education and Training Program. The program provides funds for teaching children, teachers, and school food service people about food and its importance to health. **Page 10**

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Food Stamps: Q&A's

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Q What is the Food Stamp Program?

A The Food Stamp Program is a nationwide program which helps low-income families buy the foods they need for good health. The program is authorized by Congress, administered nationally by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service, and run through State welfare agencies and their local offices.

Q Who can get food stamps?

A Households with no income, or with low incomes from

- part-time work
- low-paying jobs
- public welfare
- Social Security,
- small pensions or other low fixed-income sources.

No one gets food stamps automatically. Every household interested in participating must apply and meet nationwide requirements. People who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are not eligible for food stamps in States which already provide food stamp benefits in the form of increased SSI payments.

Q How is eligibility determined?

A Local food stamp offices use uniform nationwide criteria to certify people for the Food Stamp Program.

To qualify, a household's income, after deductions, must be below a certain level. And the household's resources must not exceed a certain amount.

Other criteria are nonfinancial. A person or group of people must qualify as a food stamp "household," as defined by law. They must meet certain citizenship requirements. Unemployed adults must register to work unless they are exempted from this requirement. And students must meet certain rules.

Q What is a food stamp "household"?

A The law requires that eligibility for food stamps be determined on a household basis, since it is common practice for persons living together to purchase food and prepare meals together. However, people who live together may not necessarily constitute a single household for food stamp purposes. If one or more of them purchase and prepare their food separately, they may qualify as a separate household and may apply for food stamps for themselves.

Any adult household member can apply for food stamps, or may authorize someone else to apply for the household. The income, resources, and deductible expenses of all persons in each applicant household will be counted to determine that household's eligibility for the Food Stamp Program.

Q Do people have to be related to be a food stamp household?

A Most food stamp households are families, but people do not have to be related to each other to be a food stamp household. A household can be:

- a person who lives alone;
- a person who lives with others, but usually buys food and prepares meals separately from the others;
- a person who lives with others and pays them for meals;
- a group of people who live to-

gether and buy food and prepare meals together;

- a group of people who live with others and pay them for meals.

With only a few exceptions, a household cannot be a person or group of people who live in a commercial boarding house or an institution. The exceptions include: residents of federally subsidized housing for the elderly; and narcotic addicts or alcoholics who live in treatment facilities.

Q Must households have cooking facilities?

A No.

Q Must a person be a U.S. citizen to participate?

A U.S. citizens, permanent legal aliens, and certain other legal aliens may qualify. Aliens who are in the United States on student visas do not qualify. Legal aliens must provide proof of their legal status from the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Even if some members of a household do not meet this requirement, those members who do may qualify for food stamps.

Q Who has to register for work?

A With certain exceptions, unemployed people who are physically and mentally fit and between the ages of 18 and 60 must register for and accept suitable employment. Work registration rules are explained in more detail on page 7. The food stamp certification worker will tell the household representative which members must register.

Q Can students get food stamps?

A Students can qualify for food stamps if they meet the same eligibility rules as all other applicants, plus special work requirements (explained on page 7), and a tax dependency test. Students age 18 and older who are enrolled at least half-time in an institution of higher education and who could be claimed as tax dependents of ineligible households cannot get food stamps.

Q How many assets, or resources, can a household have?

A By law, certain resources are counted in figuring eligibility for the Food Stamp Program, and others are not. The law sets a limit on the amount of "countable" resources a household can have.

Most households can have up to \$1,750 in countable resources. The only exceptions are households of two or more people in which at least one person is over age 60. These households can have up to \$3,000 in countable resources.

Q What counts as resources?

A Countable resources include cash on hand and assets which can be easily converted to cash, such as money in savings accounts, U.S. Savings Bonds, and stocks and bonds. They also include such other assets as buildings and land—except for the family home and lot. Vehicles, except those used to produce income, are evaluated for fair market value;

the portion of the value which is over \$4,500 counts as a resource.

Q What resources are not counted?

A Resources not counted for food stamp eligibility include:

- a home and lot;
- any licensed vehicles used mainly to produce income, like taxis and certain trucks;
- life insurance policies;
- real estate that produces income consistent with its fair market value;
- tools of a tradesman; and
- farm machinery.

Q How much income can a household have?

A To be eligible for food stamps, a household's "net income," after certain deductions, must fall below the Federal poverty guidelines for that size household. If the household's net income is more than the Federal poverty guidelines, the household is not eligible.

To find a household's "net income," a food stamp worker:

1. Adds all "countable" income.

By law, some income counts in figuring food stamp eligibility, and some does not count. A household's total "countable" income is its "gross income."

2. Subtracts from gross income allowable deductions. The resulting figure—gross income minus deductions—is a household's net income.

The Federal poverty guidelines are set by the Office of Management and Budget and adjusted annually to reflect changes in the cost of living. For the period July 1979-July 1980, the net income limit for a household with four people is \$596 per month, or \$7,150 per year. The net income limit for a one-person household is \$306 per month, or \$3,670 per year.

Q What is counted as income?

A Countable income includes the following:

- wages;
- net earnings from self-employment;
- public assistance;
- retirement or disability benefits;
- veterans', workmen's or unemployment compensation;
- old age, survivors', or strike benefits;
- support payments, or alimony received;
- scholarships, educational grants, fellowships, or veterans' educational benefits not used to pay tuition and mandatory fees;
- foster care payments for children or adults;
- dividends, interest, and other payments which benefit the household.

Q What kinds of income are not counted?

A The following kinds of income are not counted for food stamp eligibility:

- earnings of a student under 18 who is attending school at least half-time and who is a household member;
- amounts paid for court-ordered support or alimony payments;
- portions of educational loans, grants, scholarships, veterans' educational benefits and the like which are used for tuition and mandatory fees;
- any income which is not in money, such as produce from a garden;
- loans (except deferred repayment loans for other-than-mandatory educational expenses);
- one-time lump sum benefits like

payments from insurance refunds, and inheritances;

- certain cash payments made by a third party on behalf of the household, such as rent paid by a third party directly to the landlord;
- the cost of doing business, if self-employed;
- certain kinds of income excluded by law;
- certain reimbursements for expenses.

Q What deductions can be subtracted from gross income?

A Allowable deductions from gross income include:

A standard deduction. All households can subtract a standard amount from their total monthly income. This amount is adjusted twice a year to reflect changes in the cost of living. For the period January-July 1980, the standard deduction is \$75.

An earned income deduction.

Working households can also subtract 20 percent from their total monthly earned income, to make up for taxes and other mandatory deductions, like Social Security.

A deduction for actual dependent care and excess shelter costs.

Households can subtract a certain maximum for: actual dependent care costs; shelter costs which take more than 50 percent of the household's income after all other deductions; or a combination of both. The amount of this deduction cannot be more than a maximum set by law.

This maximum is adjusted annually to reflect changes in the cost of living. For the period July 1979-July 1980, the maximum is \$90. Dependent care costs are what a household pays for someone to care for dependent children or disabled adults so that a person in the household can work, look for a job, or take a training course

leading to a job.

Shelter costs include rent, mortgage payments (including interest or other charges required for ownership), utility payments, property taxes, and the cost of insurance on a home. Shelter costs can also apply to homes not currently occupied because employment or disaster has temporarily made living there impossible.

Special medical and shelter deductions for the elderly and disabled.

Certain households with elderly or disabled people qualify for special deductions. Households qualify if they include at least one person who:

- is 60 years old, or older, or
- receives Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or
- receives disability payments under the Social Security Act **and if either:**
- the elderly or disabled person has medical expenses over \$35 a month, **or**
- the household has high shelter costs.

Households which qualify can subtract all shelter costs exceeding 50 percent of their adjusted income. They can also subtract medical costs exceeding \$35 incurred by the elderly or disabled person. Medical expenses which are reimbursed by insurance or government programs are not deductible.

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How do people apply for and get food stamps?

Q How does a household apply for food stamps?

A A household member—or an adult representative named by the household—contacts the local food stamp office, completes an application form, and has an interview with a food stamp worker. In most communities, the food stamp office is run by the local welfare or social services department.

For the interview, applicants should bring papers that show: (1) how much income they have; and (2) how much they pay for such expenses as rent, utilities, and dependent care. Households eligible for the special medical deduction should also bring proof of medical costs.

Examples of the kinds of papers applicants should bring include: rent receipts; mortgage payment stubs; property tax receipts; utility (electricity, water, gas, telephone) bill receipts; bank books or other papers which show savings; and proof of expenses, such as receipts for the dependent care payments necessary for household members to work.

The food stamp worker will explain who must register for work.

Q What if applicants can't get to the food stamp office?

A Applicants who are age 65 and older or disabled can ask the office to arrange a home or telephone interview, if they cannot go to the office or get someone to go for them. Other people who cannot get to the office and who have no one to go for them may qualify for a home or telephone interview, too.

Q How do households find out if they qualify for food stamps?

A After interviewing a household representative, review-

ing the household's application, and certifying certain information, a food stamp worker sends an eligible household a notice and a food stamp identification card. The notice explains how many stamps the household will get and how long it can receive food stamps before someone from the household must reapply.

People who do not qualify receive notices explaining why they were found ineligible.

Q How soon can households get their food stamps?

A Under Federal regulations, the food stamp office must either approve or deny an application within 30 days of receiving it. Eligible applicants must be able to get their food stamps within 30 days of the date they submitted their applications, provided they cooperated with the agency in processing the application. Households with little or no money may qualify for faster service.

Q How are food stamps issued?

A Food stamps are issued to households by several different methods. The food stamp worker will explain to the household representative the method used by the local office.

Q What can people do if they disagree with the food stamp office's decision?

A People should tell the food stamp office if they think their applications have been wrongly denied, if they think they have been assigned an incorrect amount of food stamps, or if they believe the food stamp office has not followed other program rules. If the office does not agree, applicants or participants can ask for a

fair hearing, explained in more detail on page 8.

Q How long can a household receive food stamps before it must reapply?

A A household is given the longest certification period possible, based on the likelihood of changes in its circumstances. Most households are certified for 3 months. Households with very stable circumstances can be certified for up to 12 months. Households whose circumstances are likely to change soon are certified for 1 or 2 months.

Q What is a household's food stamp "allotment"?

A A household's allotment is the total amount of stamps the household gets each month. The amount of stamps each household receives is based on the number of people in the household and the amount of net monthly income the household has after certain deductions have been subtracted. All households of the same size and with the same net income, after deductions, get the same amount of food stamps.

The maximum amount of food stamps a household can receive is equal to the cost of an economical model food plan adjusted for different household sizes. As net monthly income rises, the amount of the household's allotment is reduced. In other words, as income goes up, benefits go down. However, all eligible households receive at least a \$10 monthly allotment.

Food stamp allotments are adjusted every January and July to allow for changes in food costs.

Q Is there any cost for food stamps?

A No. Food stamps are issued at no charge to certified households.

3

How do people use food stamps?

Q How do participants use food stamps?

A Any responsible household member—or a representative named by the household—can use food stamps like money to buy food at authorized food stores.

Participants can use stamps to buy almost any food, or seeds and plants to grow food for the household's own use. They cannot use food stamps for: alcoholic beverages; tobacco or cigarettes; household supplies, soaps and paper products; vitamins and medicines; or any other nonfood items. They cannot use food stamps for food that will be eaten in the store; hot foods that are ready to eat, like barbecued chicken; or pet foods.

Q Do participants get cash change for food stamps when they make a food purchase?

A Food stamp shoppers get a \$1 food stamp coupon back for every \$1 in change due. For amounts of 99 cents or less, they receive cash change.

Q Where can food stamps be used?

A Most food stores are authorized to accept food stamps. In addition, some non-profit meal delivery services, communal dining facilities, and certain restaurants are authorized

to accept food stamps for meals served to Supplemental Security Income recipients and elderly food stamp participants and their spouses.

Q What are meal delivery services and communal dining facilities?

A Meal delivery services and communal dining facilities serve meals to low- and moderate-income elderly, and physically and mentally handicapped people.

Meal delivery services deliver prepared meals to the home. Communal dining facilities are central eating places in some senior citizen centers, federally subsidized housing complexes, apartment buildings, and certain restaurants. These facilities prepare and serve meals to elderly people or SSI recipients and their spouses.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture authorizes some meal delivery services and communal dining facilities to accept food stamps for prepared meals.

Q Who may use food stamps for meal delivery services or communal dining?

A Supplemental Security Income recipients and people 60 years old and older (and their spouses) may use food stamps to pay for meals at communal dining facilities. Elderly, mentally and physically handicapped, and other people who cannot adequately prepare all of their meals may use stamps to pay for meal delivery services.

In both instances, the food stamp participant must also meet the requirements for participating in these special meal programs, and the meal delivery service or communal dining facility must be authorized to accept food stamps.

Q How do meal delivery services or communal dining programs identify food stamp participants?

A The food stamp office gives each household with one or more members eligible to use food stamps for delivered meals a regular food stamp identification card marked with the letter "M". Identification cards for recipients eligible to use stamps at a communal dining center may be marked with the letters "CD."

Q Must all of the food stamp allotment be spent for delivered meals or communal dining?

A No. It can also be used to buy eligible foods in a retail food store authorized to accept food stamps.

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What is the work registration requirement?

Q What is the work registration requirement?

A For a household to be eligible for food stamps, members who are physically and mentally fit between the ages of 18 and 60 must register for and accept suitable employment. There are certain exceptions to the work registration requirement, and there are special rules for students.

Q What are the exceptions to the work registration requirement?

A Exceptions to the work registration requirement include:

- a household member who is responsible for the care of a disabled adult;
- a single parent or caretaker of a dependent child under age 12; or
- a parent or caretaker of a dependent child under age 18 in a household where another parent is working or registered for work;
- people who are working at least 30 hours per week or earning weekly at least the Federal minimum wage multiplied by 30;
- physically or mentally disabled people;
- people under age 18 or over age 60;
- participants in drug or alcoholic rehabilitation programs;
- certain students.

At the time of initial certification, recertification, or change in employment status, the food stamp worker determines which members of the household must register for work.

Q What are the special work rules for students?

A Students, age 18 through 59, enrolled at least halftime in any recognized school, training program or institution of higher education are exempt from registering for full-time employment. However, students must register for 20 hours of work per week dur-

ing the school year, unless they are exempted for reasons explained below. And, during school vacations exceeding 30 days, they must register for full-time work.

Institutions of higher education are any institutions providing post-high school education, including colleges, universities, vocational and technical schools, and others.

During the regular school year, students enrolled at least halftime in an institution of higher education must register for 20 hours of work per week unless they are:

- employed for a minimum of 20 hours per week or participating in a federally financed work-study program;
- employed less than 20 hours per week but earning an amount at least equal to the Federal minimum wage multiplied by 20;
- heads of households with one or more people to whom the student supplies more than one-half their total support;
- otherwise exempt.

Examples of students exempt from this provisions are high schools students over age 18 and college students who are disabled.

Q Are strikers or workers affected by lockouts required to register?

A Yes. Strikers must also meet all other eligibility requirements before they can receive food stamps.

Q Where do household members register for work?

A They register at the local food stamp office when they apply for food stamps and then every 6 months after that.

Q What happens after household members have registered?

A They must report to the State employment service when they are asked to, respond to State employment service requests for additional information, and accept and continue suitable employment.

Q What if a household member doesn't comply?

A If a student does not meet the school year work requirements, the individual student will be disqualified for 2 months, or until he or she complies or becomes exempt.

If any other household member doesn't comply with work registration requirements, the entire household will be ineligible for 2 months, or until the member complies or becomes exempt.

Q Who decides the suitability of a job offer?

A The food stamp certification staff uses U.S. Department of Agriculture criteria to decide if the work is suitable.

Q What jobs are not considered suitable?

A A job is not "suitable" unless the wages equal the Federal minimum wage, the State minimum wage, or 80 percent of the Federal minimum wage if no wage standard applies to the job. If the

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What are participants' rights and responsibilities?

job pays on a piece rate basis, the expected hourly yield must meet the Federal minimum hourly wage standards.

Employment is also not considered suitable if:

- as a condition of employment, the registrant must join, resign from, or refrain from joining any legitimate labor organization;
- the job site is subject to a strike or lockout at the time of the offer, unless the strike has been forbidden by law;
- there is an unreasonable degree of risk to the registrant's health and safety;
- the registrant is not physically or mentally fit to do the work;
- the work is not in the registrant's major field of experience, unless after 30 days from registration, the registrant has not received a job offer in that field.

Q Can an applicant refuse a job that the food stamp staff considers suitable?

A The applicant can request a fair hearing to decide whether the job is suitable. The food stamp office must grant the request if it is made within 90 days from the date the applicant is told of the position.

Q What happens if a food stamp applicant has quit his or her most recent job?

A If the primary wage earner of a household has quit a job within 60 days before applying, without good cause as defined by Federal regulations, the entire household will be barred from participating in the Food Stamp Program for 2 months.

Q What rights do food stamp applicants and participants have?

A Food stamp applicants and participants have the right to:

- receive an application the same day they ask for it;
- have their applications accepted immediately;
- have an adult who knows the households' circumstances apply for them, if they cannot get to the food stamp office themselves;
- have a home visit or a telephone interview if they are 65 or older or are disabled and cannot get to the food stamp office or find someone to go for them;
- get their food stamps within 30 days after they apply, if they are eligible;
- get food stamps within a few days, if they are in immediate need and qualify for faster service;
- receive fair treatment regardless of age, sex, race, color, handicap, religious creed, national origin, or political beliefs;
- be notified in advance (usually 10 days in advance) if the food stamp office is going to reduce or end their benefits;
- examine their own case files and a copy of the food stamp rules;
- have a fair hearing if they disagree with any action taken in their case.

Q What is a fair hearing?

A The law gives all households the right to take their case to an impartial hearing authority if they disagree with any action taken on the case.

Q How does a household get a fair hearing?

A When a household applies for food stamps, the food stamp worker informs the household of its right to a fair hearing and how

to request one. Hearing procedures are published by the State agency and are available at the food stamp office.

The household, or a person acting for it, such as a friend, relative, or legal representative, can ask the food stamp office staff for a hearing either orally or in writing. The State agency must help the household make out its request and prepare its case. If legal services are available in the community, the State agency directs the household to them.

In some cases, households that have been notified that their benefits will be reduced can continue to receive their food stamps without a change until the fair hearing is decided.

Q What rights does a household have when presenting a case?

A A hearing is an opportunity for a household to present arguments and evidence in its own behalf. The head of the household or a representative has the right to examine all documents and records which might be used at the hearing, bring witnesses, submit evidence establishing pertinent facts, and question or refute any testimony or evidence.

Q Who makes the decision at a fair hearing?

A The State agency designates a hearing authority to make the final administrative decision. The authority may be the highest executive officer of the State welfare agency, a panel of officials

from that agency, or a person who has been appointed expressly for the purpose and has not participated in the action being appealed. The decision of the hearing authority is based exclusively on a review of the hearing record.

Q When and where is the hearing held?

A The State food stamp agency is responsible for setting the time, date, and place of a hearing so that it is accessible to the household.

Q How long does it take to get final action on a hearing?

A The state agency must take final action within 60 days of the date the household requested the hearing. The hearing authority notifies the household in writing of the decision, and of any right the household has for further review.

If the hearing authority finds that the household is entitled to benefits it had been denied, the household will receive them within 10 days after being notified of the hearing decision.

Q What rules must households follow?

A Members of food stamp households must answer all questions completely and honestly when they apply for food stamps. They must also:

- provide proof that they are eligible;
- report promptly to the food stamp office certain changes in their household's circumstances;
- use food stamps only to buy eligible items;
- **not** put their money or possessions in someone else's name in

order to qualify for food stamps;

- **not** make any changes in any food stamp cards or documents;
- **not** sell, trade, or give away their food stamps, or any food stamp cards or documents.

Q Are there penalties for not following these rules?

A Yes. People who break these rules may be disqualified from the program, fined, imprisoned, or all three.

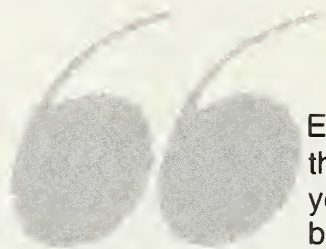
Q When, where and how should changes in household circumstances be reported?

A The head of the household or authorized representative must report:

- all changes in income of more than \$25;
- changes in the number of household members;
- changes in residence and the resulting shelter costs;
- the acquisition of a nonexcluded licensed vehicle or of liquid resources that put the household's resources over the eligibility limit.

Changes must be reported to the food stamp office by mail, telephone or in person within 10 days of the date of the change.

by Devra S. Massey



Eat your vegetables, they're good for you." "No sweets before mealtime

for growing boys and girls." We've all heard or even spoken these admonishments at one time or another.

But Audrey Maretzki, director of a national program designed to teach children the importance of good food, believes this is the wrong approach for schools to take.

"Children are tired of adults preaching to them about what they should and shouldn't eat," she said. "We need to give children tools that will enable them to determine what foods are good for them, and we need to give them the opportunity to practice using these tools."

The program Maretzki heads—the Nutrition Education and Training Program, or NET—is designed to do just that. Administered by USDA's Food and Nutrition Service, NET provides

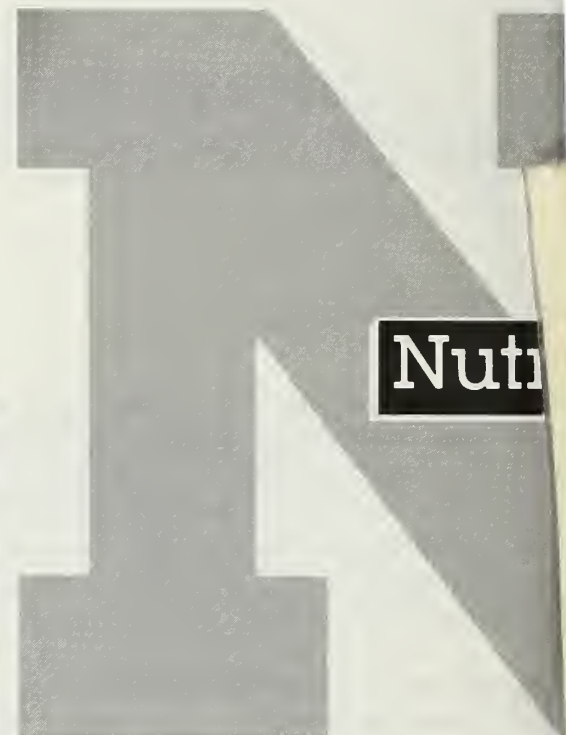


funds for developing nutrition education activities and materials for children. It also provides funds for training the people who teach and feed children—teachers and school food service personnel.

States get grants

Through NET, States get funds in the form of grants to State educational agencies. In 1978 and 1979, the amount of each State's grant was based on a formula of 50 cents for each child enrolled in public or non-profit private schools and institutions. No State, however, received less than \$75,000. To qualify for a grant, a State education agency hires an NET coordinator, who assesses the need for nutrition education and training, and proposes a "plan of action."

As Maretzki explained, NET is closely tied to the school breakfast and lunch programs. Created by the



November 1977 amendments to child nutrition legislation contained in Public Law 95-166, it has as one of its main goals building a stronger link between the cafeteria and the classroom.

School food services, Maretzki said, offer schools the opportunity to



make learning about food a total educational experience for children. To help schools improve their food services, NET activities include management training for cafeteria managers and their staffs.

Activities underway

NET activities are well underway in many States. For example:

Using NET funds, States are helping schools and child care centers develop imaginative projects which explore ways to get children interested and involved in learning about food. Approaches run the gamut from "hands on" cooking ex-

“Eat your vegetables, they're good for you.” “No sweets before mealtime for growing boys and girls.” We've all heard or even spoken these admonishments at one time or another. But Audrey Maretzki, director of a national program designed to teach children the importance of good food, believes this is the wrong approach for schools to take.

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perience for preschoolers to “peer-teaching,” in which teenagers are trained to instruct elementary school students.

“Peer-teaching” is a two-way learning experience for students in Manchester, Connecticut, where the approach is winning fans. Said one student instructor: “Some of the elementary students didn't even think about what they were eating until we told them something about nutrition. I have also learned things from teaching them.”

Many States are holding nutrition education workshops for school food service personnel and teachers. Food service personnel are learning how to make meals more appealing and palatable to children. And teachers are learning how to integrate nutrition education into other subject areas. A key topic is how teachers, cafeteria managers, and parents can work together and get the support of other people as well—athletic coaches and



school administrators, for instance.

Activities focus on reaching parents, too. As Maretzki sees it, parents' support is essential. “They're the role models,” she emphasizes. Many participating schools are sending nutrition materials home with children, and inviting parents to help plan and take part in food-related projects. State and local NET coordinators are also using the media—newspapers,



radio and television to build parents' interest.

What about results?

Maretzki feels the program has been successful. Data from one state, Pennsylvania, shows changes in students' food selections since im-

plementation of NET in several communities. In California, school food service personnel are finding students are willing to accept more nutritious foods since the program started.

“A national study is presently being conducted to assess the NET program,” Maretzki said. “This study will give us an opportunity to document what is happening and how NET funds are being used.”

“The foremost goal of NET is to help children become healthy, well informed citizens and knowledgeable consumers,” she continued. “At the same time we want to train teachers and school food service personnel to make the cafeteria a nutrition learning laboratory—and the classrooms an extension of that learning laboratory.”

by Marilyn Stackhouse



Developing a State Plan: Three State Coordinators Share Their Experiences

Patty Brookover, Michigan

How do you get people interested in nutrition education and training? For Patty Brookover, Michigan's State NET coordinator, that question was a starting point. "You must stir up interest," she says, "find people who share your interest in having more nutrition education in the schools, and then get a commitment from them."

"But," she adds, "before you can merchandise a program, you need to know what you have to offer."

In working on her State NET plan, Brookover decided she had two choices. One choice was to structure a plan and then take it to the people who would be involved in carrying it out—school administrators, teachers, and food service managers. The other choice was to go to the local people first and ask them what the plan should include.

In her first NET plan submitted to USDA, Brookover opted for the second choice. She proposed using NET funds for the 1978-79 school year to explore—through pilot projects and other activities—what people were already doing, what resources and materials were available, what schools needed, and what approaches worked best.

Her aim was to come up with information that would help her do two things: develop a more structured NET plan for the following year, and have identifiable results with which to "market" NET to schools and State leaders. As Brookover sees it, to get

people interested and involved, you need to be able to talk about possible results.

First step: finding help

Brookover began by forming a nutrition education advisory group. The advisory group represents 50 statewide nutrition and education agencies and organizations, as well as parents, students, and consumers. In setting up the group, Brookover looked for people who were themselves resource people or who had access to resources.

As the NET coordinator explained, the group's work formed the basis for Michigan's initial plan. "These people gathered data that showed a need for NET in the State," she said, "and it was with this information that we wrote our first plan." The group continues to advise the Michigan Department of Education on all NET-related issues.

Since the State NET staff was limited to two people—Brookover and her recently appointed part-time secretary—it was obvious they needed a mechanism to reach a larger number of people. Using NET funds, the State Department of Education gave a grant to the intermediate school district association to help administer the NET program.

During 1978, the association helped the State sponsor 16 pilot projects to identify NET needs. Eight of the projects were grants to local education agencies to assess the need for nutrition education and training for food service managers and teachers. Three were grants to universities and colleges to assess support services such as printed training materials and audiovisuals. And five projects were for day care and residential institutions, focusing on nutrition education for primary and early elementary children and their parents.

Brookover explained that one goal of the projects was to get additional information on specific needs as well as existing materials and curricula. Another goal was to test approaches. "The idea," she said, "was to give people in the field money to try something out and ask them to report back on how it worked."

What did they learn?

"We learned a lot from these projects," Brookover said. "For example, we learned it was hard to make parents aware of their need for nutrition education, and that we could begin educating them through the children."

"One way we did this was to send home a letter informing parents of their children's participation in the NET program and telling them they could expect the children to be asking questions about certain nutrition facts and nutritious foods. The letters listed NET activities for that particular week or month."

In a workshop in September, Brookover and project supervisors evaluated 1978-79 activities. The data from this workshop helped determine what worked and what is needed for a comprehensive ongoing NET program. In addition to activities for children and parents, the ongoing program includes professional development activities for administrators, teachers, food service and other personnel in schools, child care institutions, and family day care homes.

Patty Brookover is eager to share what she's learned and to hear of other nutrition education and training activities.

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by Eunice Wilson Bowman

Mary Jo Tuckwell, Wisconsin

Mary Jo Tuckwell, Wisconsin's State NET coordinator, is employed by the Department of Public Instruction. She chose to make use of the State's already existing 19 cooperative educational service agencies (CESA's) in structuring a State plan. CESA's provide cooperatively needed services to individual school districts through contracts with district school boards.

Tuckwell contracted with CESA to help her implement the NET program. CESA divided its 19 agencies into 6 NET regions, and using NET funds, hired a nutrition education specialist for each region. The specialists work with the schools to identify what the NET needs are in each district.

Specialists give workshops

To stimulate local acceptance of nutrition as an integral part of education, the specialists offer "awareness workshops" to each school district. As Carol Farrell, registered dietician and supervisor of NET-CESA region nine, explains, "We give the awareness workshops to explain the services available to schools through NET and to help schools identify their particular needs."

"... teachers are already bogged down with so many extras—environmental programs, crises in family life and drug education—there's a push to get back to basics. We had to make sure NET was not looked at as just another educational frill."

In order for school districts to receive funds or assistance through NET, they must participate in the workshops. Participants may include school administrators, curriculum directors, teachers, food service personnel, parents, and students. The workshops are held during the day at individual schools, and teachers are given time off from their regular schedules to attend.

Workshops use several group discussion techniques to identify the current nutrition education concerns within the school district. Workshop leaders ask participants to assess: (1) the nutrition education program presently being used in the school system; (2) the level of nutrition knowledge of school administrators, teachers, food service directors, parents, and students; (3) the resource material currently being used, and (5) the five most outstanding nutrition concerns in their district.

"These concerns are then used to plan pilot NET activities in each NET-CESA region," Tuckwell said.

In leading the workshops and in planning follow-up activities, Wisconsin's NET specialists draw upon a wide range of resources already established by community agencies and educational institutions. "We are taking advantage of technical research services offered by nutrition education consultants, university professors, and teachers," Tuckwell said.

Tuckwell and the regional specialists have received help in disseminating NET information from newsletter editors, local health and education groups, audiovisual distribution centers, and a variety of community services.

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Amanda Dew Mellinger, California

The idea of sponsoring nutrition education projects is not a new one for California. For 3 years, the State Department of Education has given funds to local schools and communities for a variety of nutrition education activities. Before that, in 1973 and 1975, the State had received USDA grants for pilot nutrition education projects.

What is new is the chance to be part of a nationwide nutrition education effort and—using both State and Federal monies—to reach more children than ever before.

"There's a tremendous amount of attention focused on nutrition today," says State NET coordinator Amanda Dew Mellinger. "People are looking for ways to improve their nutritional status, and education certainly helps."

California channels NET funds to 153 local nutrition projects in schools and child care centers. Twenty-eight of the projects began with State funds and have just completed their third year. These will become "model projects" after which other schools and centers will pattern nutrition education plans of their own.

California's goals and plans

Like the national goals, California's goals are to provide children and teachers, school administrators, food service personnel, and parents with information about nutrition and its importance.

Federal regulations give States a good deal of flexibility to determine how they will accomplish their goals. Mellinger and her staff are focusing their efforts on four main areas:

The first is a media campaign of

Teaching the People Who Teach the Kids: A Look at One State's Approach

public announcements to underscore the importance of nutrition education and to introduce what's already happening in the State.

The second area of emphasis is the development of a nutrition education curriculum. The curriculum will include nutrition education lessons for all classes, kindergarten through grade 12, and will involve both classroom instruction and food service activities.

A third component, staff development and community education, focuses on training school food service personnel, teachers, child care operators, school administrators, parents, and other adults. The goal is to explain how each group can help children learn about better nutrition.

The fourth component is funding for nutrition projects in local schools and child care centers. Efforts focus on student instruction, staff training, development of materials, and parent and community education.

A teamwork approach

The California NET staff places high priority on community involvement. They wrote their first State plan with the help of a task force of 80 people, including nutritionists, dietitians, representatives of professional organizations, community advocates, and other people with an understanding of California's nutrition education needs. California developed amendments to the 1978 plan and has since written a 1980 plan, again using task forces to advise them.

The staff also emphasizes continuing evaluation. Since California first began funding nutrition education activities, the State has closely monitored local projects and has been able to adjust them in mid-stride as necessary. "It's also valuable to have the hard data on hand to show that nutrition education is important, and

that it's working," Mellinger says.

From a "how-to" standpoint, Mellinger feels it's important for NET coordinators to work together and "think like managers." She explains, "Nutritionists, dietitians, and educators who are just now beginning to take on the role of program administrators must operate the NET program from a good, sound management base."

Program coordinators, she says, need to use management principles in planning and organizing, in selecting and training staff, in budgeting and accounting for funds, and in seeking out and encouraging the cooperation of all those people who can make a positive contribution to the program.

A lesson learned in California's first year with NET is to set realistic, attainable goals. For States just starting out, Mellinger has this advice: "Don't be tempted to try to do everything at once. You run the risk of not doing anything well."

Next year some changes

In the last 2 fiscal years, the California staff has provided \$3.5 million in State and Federal funds to schools and community agencies, believing that's where the program has to start. Next year they'll expand the training of food service workers, work on more training for teachers, and spend more money on media.

By the end of the next year, they plan to develop a curriculum package of nutrition lessons for all grades and distribute it to all California schools. Although use of that package is not mandatory, Mellinger intends "to make it so good that schools will want to adopt it."

by Tino Serrano

Nutrition education is very much in evidence this year in schools throughout Mississippi, thanks to the State's Nutrition Education and Training Program. Through the program, 600 teachers and school food service personnel took part in workshops this summer, and learned how to incorporate nutrition education into the regular school curriculum.

"The reason we're approaching nutrition education in this manner," said State NET coordinator Pat Keyes, "is that most principals feel that their programs are already full. If we wanted a new subject added, they would probably refuse. But when we tell them that this will enrich the existing curriculum, well, then they're more receptive."

Set priorities for training

The Mississippi Department of Education contracted with the University of Mississippi at Oxford to conduct the actual training workshops. The university staff developed training modules for two groups of teachers: teachers of kindergarten through grade 3, and of grades 7 through grade 12. They also developed a training packet for school food service personnel. Teachers from grades 4 through 6 will be trained next summer.

In deciding which teachers to train first, Keyes said, the training coordinators did a "needs assessment," surveying principals, teachers, school food service personnel and others. Most people said priority should be given to reaching the



youngest and the oldest students first.

Younger children, they felt, should receive the training because nutritional habits are formed early in life. They chose the senior high students because of the particular problems of this age group—teenage pregnancy, for example—and because of a general agreement that “if you don’t reach them in senior high school, you may never reach them.”

Jeanette Phillips, associate professor of home economics at the University of Mississippi, is the nutrition education project director. She explained that the curriculum guides were based on four basic concepts of nutrition education that were developed by the Interagency Committee on Nutrition Education.

In general, the concepts define nutrition and nutrients, stress the importance of proper food handling, and explain that nutritional needs vary, depending on an individual’s age, sex, health, and activities.

For grades 7 through 12, there are two modules—one on basic food patterns and one on weight control. Phillips said they decided to include a separate module on weight control because “this is the number one problem.”

“We have a lot of teenage girls going on diets that are harmful to their health,” she said. “Many times we see teenage girls who are anemic.”

The training packet for school food service personnel deals with nutrition and food preparation, and suggests ways managers can work with teachers to teach nutrition in the classroom and cafeteria. It suggests holding tasting parties to introduce new foods and dishes; decorating bulletin boards with nutrition information; and organizing Youth Advisory Councils to involve students in food service activities.

Teaching the Kids: From Preschoolers to High Schoolers

Twenty workshops

From June through August, two teams conducted a total of 20, 3-day workshops around the State. Each team included four teachers and an evaluator, who administered tests and kept records. The effectiveness of the teaching was measured by pre- and post-testing.

The teams used a variety of teaching techniques—lectures, skits, puppet shows, films, slides, and tasting parties. Each workshop participant received a \$100 stipend which could be used to cover the cost of 3 hours of credit from the University of Mississippi.

During the school year, participants are expected to provide at least 5 hours of nutrition education in their classrooms or cafeterias. Next spring, the university will hold follow-up workshops, where revised curriculum guides will be distributed and teachers and managers can share their experiences.

by Linda Klein

NET in a High School

The smell of burning food drifts down the hallways of Nova High School in Redding, California. A casual observer might envision a cooking project gone aflame in the home economics class. But ninth grade students at Nova know better. It's the science class, burning lunch again as students do experiments to find the calorie content of foods.

At Nova, it's a regular occurrence for the science class to be burning lunch, just as it's normal for all the classes to be experimenting with, reading up on, or writing about food and nutrition. Largely because of the efforts of school home economist Pat Binkeley over the past 3 years, the courses of each department now include some aspect of nutrition education.

The math class, for example, studies the Recommended Daily Allowances of specific nutrients. Geography students read about world health, cultural eating patterns, and world food problems. English classes discuss restaurant menus, and students write papers about their food choices. Science classes study the chemistry of foods and do experiments, like dehydrating milk. A new class, Western Literature, is studying foods of the early West, grinding corn into flour and making stew.

In their personal growth classes, students keep food diaries, put together individual calorie and exercise

guides, and collect food literature. Children with learning disabilities receive individualized nutrition training, and physical education classes include daily nutrition lessons.

That the nutrition lessons are having a positive influence on these young people and their eating habits may come as a surprise to some. The students are all ninth graders, 14- to 15-year olds, with a history of eating that they like. What's more, readily available just across the street is the "competition"—a variety of snack foods with little or no nutritional value.

But there are positive forces at work, says Pat Binkeley, especially the country's current high interest in physical fitness and nutrition. By first winning the support of teachers, she has parlayed that interest into an enthusiastically supported, schoolwide nutrition education program.

Began with State funds

The nutrition education program's birth certificate is a 1976 letter from the State Department of Education announcing the availability of State funds. Binkeley joined the staff as the result of that offer and a Nova teacher's idea for a weight-loss class for overweight students.

In the nutrition program's first year, school year 1976-1977, Binkeley focused her efforts on setting up the weight-loss class. The class concentrated on nutrition plans for students and was reinforced with general nutrition workshops for students and their parents.

During her second year, Binkeley continued the weight-loss class and began after-school nutrition workshops for teachers. Participating teachers were given a unit of credit for attending and were encouraged to include nutrition information materials

Nova students learn to read labels for product ingredients.

Reference to commercial products does not imply endorsement or discrimination by USDA.

Food and Nutrition

in their classes.

Last year, when the Nutrition Education and Training Program came into being, Nova became eligible for the additional Federal funding for nutrition projects, and Pat Binkeley sold the Nova faculty on the concept of including some nutrition education in every core class.

Weight loss class continues

Today, the weight-loss class is still offered as a daily, elective class open to all students. It involves elements of psychology and exercise as well as nutrition and food preparation. Class members weigh in daily and keep food diaries of what they have eaten and why. Students discuss with each other their feelings about themselves and their eating habits.

They also learn how to prepare low-calorie recipes and, through a variety of activities, study the basics of nutrition. Students have: compiled a book of low-calorie snack ideas; assembled a library of books, film strips, and games which focus on nutrition; held nutrition spelling bees; made up packages of fictitious foods to better understand what to look for on labels; and developed their own food commercials about school videotape

equipment. Workshops for parents also continue. Topics include labeling, food advertising, nutritious snacking, as well as food and nutrition basics.

Results are encouraging

Since she first began the nutrition program back in 1976, Pat Binkely has been watching for results. The first encouraging signs were changes in attitudes and eating habits of students enrolled in the weight-loss class. There are now indications of obvious, if slow, changes in the attitudes and habits of other students, as well.

In the cafeteria, more students are eating complete Type A lunches, instead of choosing a la carte items from the snack bar. Salad bar and diet plate lunches are extremely popular. And for snacks, students have asked the school to sell more "healthful" foods, like granola bars, nuts, and raisins, as opposed to candies and other foods with less nutritional value.

Several teachers report they have enthusiastic student audiences for the nutrition lessons in their classes. And parents, too, have commented on what's happening. "I've had par-

ents tell me they've noticed their children preparing low-calorie, nutritious snacks and meals at home," Binkeley said.

Has fostered strong support

With the nutrition education curriculum now established, Binkeley is working to keep interest high. She meets with teachers at least twice a year—once to develop their nutrition education plans, and a second time to check the progress they've made.

She's invited newspaper reporters and other people from the media to her parent and teacher workshops, and she's asked the PTA to display general nutrition material in the halls. Periodically she sends a nutrition newsletter home to parents to keep the whole family up to date.

This year, hundreds of California schools and child care centers will begin participating in the Nutrition Education and Training Program for the first time. Because staff at Nova have proven their approach has worked, the school will be among those model projects other California schools will use as examples in developing nutrition lessons of their own.

by Tino Serrano





NET in a Child Care Center

While Lily and Kim sprinkle the sesame seeds over their still-warm sesame surprise rolls, Audrey and her friends are across the room explaining to Mr. Owl what they had for breakfast. Near the window Pam and Carla have their hands in the "Magic Box" and suspect that the item hidden inside is a carrot.

The children are all preschoolers attending the Chinatown Community Children's Center, a bilingual and bicultural child care center serving, predominately, the Chinese population of San Francisco's Richmond District. Learning activities at the

center involve the children directly in lessons which help them grow emotionally, psychologically, and socially.

What makes the Chinatown Center's nutrition training program interesting is the age and background of the children who attend and the special tools needed to teach them better, and often new, eating habits. They are preschoolers, age 3 to 5 years old; almost all are from low-income families who have recently immigrated to the U.S.; and fewer than 5 percent speak English. They recognize few domestic foods and know very little about their own native foods.

The heart of nutrition education at the Chinatown Center is a diverse collection of activities intended to teach some of the basics of good nutrition. The activities give these youngsters enough of a grasp of the fundamentals to prepare them for the more complex nutrition training they will receive when they begin school.

Teach the basics

"All of the activities capitalize on the children's natural tendencies," explained Theresa Wong, nutrition project director. "These children cannot sit still, so we direct their energy into songs, fingerplays, and games." In one game, the children choose an exercise, like running, walking, or

jumping. Afterwards they receive peanuts in proportionate amounts to illustrate that the most strenuous activities require the most "fuel."

The puppet theater and storytime activities package nutrition information in a form that will both entertain and instruct preschoolers. In their daily discussions with the handpuppet, Mr. Owl, and his puppet friends, the children discuss what they had for breakfast; why it was a balanced meal or why it wasn't; and other general food topics.

Use simple visuals

Since the children cannot read, and many, in fact, can hardly speak, the center uses a lot of simple visuals. On the "storyboard," cut-outs of Farmer Brown and his family depict lessons on foods and how they grow.

To illustrate food and growth, the class raised a rabbit and learned by direct observation that food was necessary for his health and growth.

The center's staff lets the children "make a mess." Sure-fire mess-making activities are the cooking exercises. Some exercises are for groups of five to eight, and others are for groups of two or three.

Whenever they cook, children share with classmates what they have prepared. They often get to take samples home to their parents, too. The center staff has compiled their cooking experiences into a cookbook of recipes.

In Theresa Wong's words, "The pieces are coming together." She feels a lot of the children, and their parents, are learning about better nutrition. There is statistical evidence of their new nutrition awareness, as well as more subtle, though equally important, informal observations to support that conclusion.

In the 7 months between plate waste surveys conducted this year, children at the Chinatown Center re-



duced by 39 percent the amount of meat they were wasting. By comparison, during the same time period, there was a 59-percent increase in meat waste among children in a neighboring control group, supplied similar meals by the same central kitchen. Cooked vegetable waste at the Chinatown Center decreased 42 percent, salad waste decreased 20 percent, and milk waste decreased 53 percent.

Accepting new foods

"These kids are gobbling up fresh fruits, most of them for the first time in their lives," said Wong, "and I think their acceptance of the new foods is the result of their greater appreciation for them.

"The children are realizing that food doesn't just appear magically in stores," she continued, "someone put a lot of work into raising it—making sure it received the water, sunlight and time it needed to grow. That lesson is reinforced by growing foods in class.

"The children realize, now, that food is something precious," she added, "and something they

shouldn't waste."

The new nutrition awareness is spreading into the homes as well. Wong attributes this to the frequent nutrition workshops the staff has with parents, and to students discussing with parents what they've learned. "Parents who used to bring sweets in on holidays are now coming in with nuts, fresh fruits, raisins, and fruit juice," the nutrition project director said.

"By teaching these children the absolute basics of nutrition," she added, "we're planting a seed. We do not expect to see it sprout tomorrow, but it's there, and will become more obvious in the next couple of years. Only after the seed has been allowed to develop can there be a blossom."
by Tino Serrano



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